

finds less of an ecstatic relief and release in the company of ancient Carthaginians or Christian hermits. But, beyond this, rebellion and rage are bad for the intelligence (as may be seen in the militant patriots of oppressed nationalities). They narrow the understanding and destroy all sense of proportion. A writer may get too much gall in his ink. Far better that he should remember the words of Antigone: I was born to share men's loves, and not their hates/ In consequence there is a quite unreal scarcity, in Flaubert's pages, of decent or rational beings. It seems hardly worth while settling down on the edge of the Slough of Despond in order to sling mud at it; and to read two thousand books to see in how many ways two fools could misunderstand them, was surely carrying a preoccupation with folly to the verge of it. It is strange to be irritated by human idiocy into making one's home permanently in Gotham, the better to paint it red. Yet there is about *Bouvard et Pecuchet*, at all events, an enormous, half Rabelaisian extravagance that makes much of it live in the memory; the cold, restrained misanthropy of *Education Sentimentale* though more realistic, seems to me far less alive. Human ugliness is a great deal better caricatured than modelled in wax.

But living at daggers drawn with the world affected Flaubert's work in another way as well. It made him a recluse. It was indeed his idea that every

writer ought to
be a recluse. But that is far from certain. It
is not only
that a writer needs experience. For with
imaginative
minds, no doubt, a moderate amount of
experience goes
further than might at first be guessed.
Trollope wrote
superlatively about archdeacons without any
clerical
acquaintance; he could conceive the
behaviour of human-
ity in gaiters because he had rubbed
shoulders with
humanity otherwise attired. But there are
limits; Trollope